

ANTH 355: Medical Anthropology

This course is an introduction to how the field of Medical Anthropology uses theoretical models, ethnographic research techniques, and writing from Cultural Anthropology to investigate the way that ideas about illness and things related to "medicine," "medical" procedures, and medical practitioners vary cross-culturally and intersect with relations of power both within societies and in cross-cultural encounters. Medical Anthropology is a relatively new field within Anthropology that can draw on Cultural, Biological, or Applied Anthropology. The basic premise of Medical Anthropology is that illness and suffering take place within complex social, cultural, and environmental systems that must be understood holistically, taking into consideration peoples' ideas about the body, mental states, economic relations, kinship, gender, sexuality, the supernatural, and other aspects of culture. This course will focus on the areas of Medical Anthropology that mainly consider how cultural ideas shape the way that people experience illness and "medicine" differently, their relations to different types of practitioners (doctors, shamans, others), ways that illnesses are categorized according to "folk" understandings, how illness can emanate from and express other social problems, and how even "biomedicine" contains within it certain cultural assumptions and ritual practices that stem from "western" culture and are therefore not culturally-neutral. It also explores other "niedical" processes that are not necessarily about illness such as reproductive technology, but that do involve ideas about the body, marriage, kinship, personhood, and so forth.

Units: 3

Prerequisites:

[ANTH 100](#) or [ANTH 150](#) or [SOC 100](#)

Program: [Anthropology](#)